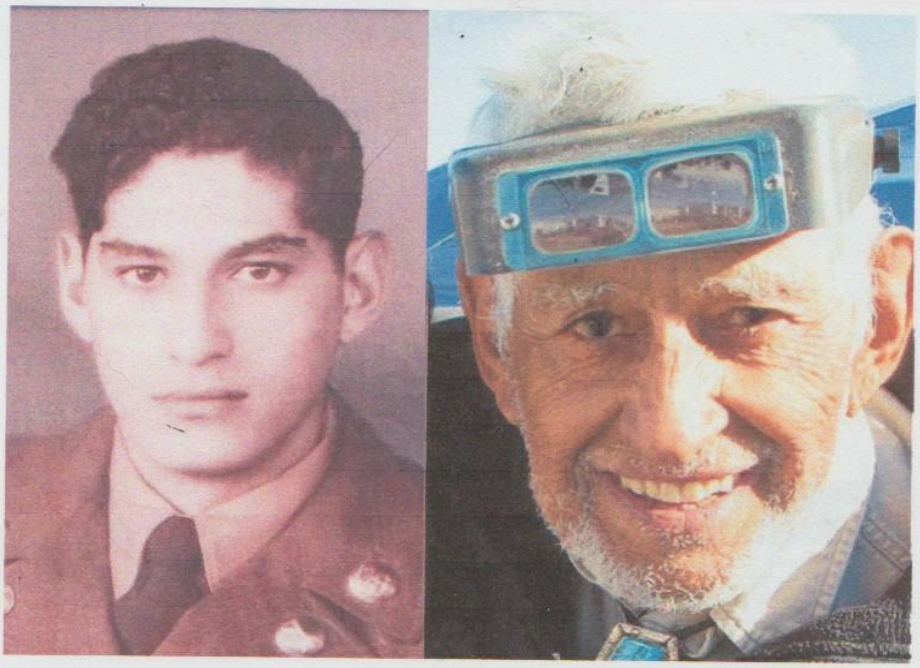
Obituary: Robert Gregory Vallejos



Robert Gregory Vallejos (May 17, 1931 — April 8, 2018) Born on Second Mesa, Arizona, to a mother he would never know, little Robert was raised in Trinidad, Colorado, by his father, John Frank Vallejos, and foster mom, Gertrude Young, plus numerous uncles, aunts and grandparents.

Taught Native American common sense and trained to become an arrow maker, young Robert escaped from poverty by joining the Army in 1948. His thirst for knowledge, plus uncommon strength and quick wit, eventually became an important asset for the Army. The Korean conflict erupted at the end of his enlistment, causing an extended tour as a commando for the 25th Infantry Division and G-2. Assigned as a liaison to NATO forces, SFC Vallejos later became a tank gunner for the 89th Med. Tank Battalion. The Daredevil Express earned SFC Vallejos and his men the Combat Service Medal and a Presidential Unit Citation from the South Korean government. Hand-to-hand combat plus sniper fire bullets also earned SFC Vallejos the Purple Heart. Finally, SFC Vallejos became a drill sergeant at Fort Ord, California, when he rotated back to the States.

Robert met and married a young Army Dental Technician, Nellie O. Guerrero. In spite of Bob's frequent rages and night terrors (now recognized as PTSD), he and devout Catholic Nellie brought five sons and six daughters into the world: Catherine Lee (b. 1952), Robert Gregory Jr. (b. 1953), Marie Annette (b. 1955), John Franklin (b. 1957), Laura Jean (b. 1958-2018), Stephen Patrick (b. 1959-2017), Timothy James (b. 1960), Rebecca Sue (Varela) (b. 1962), Jennifer Ann (Varela) (b. 1964), David Andrew (b. 1965) and Veronica (Ortiz) (b. 1967).

Supporting his family took Bob away from home frequently. His sharp intellect mastered such fields as geology, archeology, anthropology, electronics, metallurgy, silversmithing, lapidary, mining and trucking. His favorite jobs and accomplishments included: helping develop a device to measure seismic activity on the moon; conducting geology surveys for the Mexican government; supplying rock shops across the U.S. from mining claims he managed; winning a salvage bid on an old military base in Igloo, South Dakota; flying a slurry bomber in fire suppression; and working as an archeologist for the Pactola District, U.S. Forest Service in the Black Hills of South Dakota, where he occasionally gave demonstrations of authentic arrow making techniques. After losing wife Nellie to cancer in 1967, Bob subsequently married Dorothy Gilley Murphy in 1991. They left Rapid City for the warmer climate of Arizona, taking up residence in Quartzsite and later Seligman. As Bob's health waned, he spent a lot of time as a VA patient. After several health scares, and losing wife Gilley to cancer too; Bob moved to Chino Valley where he briefly established the Arrowmaker Rock Shop.

There he met and married lapidary student and "pebble pup," Teresa K. Weil. Under her constant company and care, his last three years were his happiest. Completing his mortal journey takes him back to the Black Hills and its National Veterans Cemetery.